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ABSTRACT

The Strengthening Early Childhood (Bilingual) program was designed to develop English language skills for pupils in grades one and two who were below the twenty-first percentile when tested on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) in English. One hundred thirty-eight students were seen by three teachers and three paraprofessionals in groups of ten for five 40 to 45 minute periods of instruction weekly. The program was evaluated through interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of pre and posttest LAB data. The program was found to be operating effectively and to be meshing with several other school programs in that it provided additional English instruction to children drawn from Spanish dominant classes. LAB results indicated that mean gains were achieved at both grade levels. Fifty percent of the participants reached the twenty-first percentile by the end of the program. Grade two students who had received reading instruction were tested by the Metropolitan Achievement Test and were found to have gained an average of thirteen months in grade equivalent achievement scores. Recommendations include recycling of the program, separate testing for eligibility and evaluation, and training of staff personnel in record keeping. (MK)

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FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

1978-79

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 20K

STRENGTHENING EARLY CHILDHOODBILINGUAL

TITLE I- 5071-91622

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Program Overview

The 1978-79 Strengthening Early Childhood (Bilingual) Program (SEC-B/L) of District 20 was designed to develop English language skills for selected pupils in two of the elementary grades. In grade one the focus was on facilitation in English language proficiency while in grade two the instruction also involved reading for participating pupils. Skills that were to be developed in the program included listening and speaking, increase of oral vocabulary and reading comprehension.

The instruction was small group and/or individualized with students removed from their regular classroom during a period when similar tax levy instruction was not given. Each group, consisting of approximately 10 students, met for 5, 40-45 minute periods of instruction per week. Students were deemed eligible if their percentile score on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) in English was below the 21st percentile.

The SEC-B/L Program operated at two schools: PS 140 and PS 164. In all, 3 teachers and 3 paraprofessionals comprised its teaching staff. Two teachers and 2 paraprofessionals were housed at PS 140 while the third teacher and paraprofessional were housed at PS 164. The program was designed to service 180 students.

Evaluation Activities

The SEC-B/L Program was evaluated through on site visits to each of the participating schools. During these visits, principles, teachers and paraprofessionals were interviewed. Classes were observed. In addition to the on site visits, pre and posttest LAB data were analyzed in order to assess program impact upon the participating students. Finally, the program coordinator was interviewed.

Findings

A. Observations and Interviews

This small but effective program operated as planned at each of the two participating schools. At PS 140 it very effectively meshed with the several other funded programs at the school in that it provided additional English instruction to children drawn from Spanish dominant classes. At PS 164 it provided a useful means of servicing children who were deficient in English language skills. The usefulness of the program was in its ability to provide this language instruction to targeted children pulled out from the lower grade levels. Success at this level could only mean a greater potential for learning in the higher grades.

In the classes that were observed, teachers worked with small groups of children on a pull out basis and thus were able to individualize instruction. They employed a variety of approaches, including film strips, cassette tapes and games where appropriate. They used materials such as English Around The World, the Lado English Series and teacher made materials in order to conduct pattern drills in pronounciation, to develop awareness of the alphabet and vocabulary and to expand comprehension skills.

Supplies were in good condition and each of the teachers received monies during the year in order to acquire additional texts, workbooks and games. Space, long a problem at PS 140, was limited and thus required the two teachers to share a classroom. This was not the optimal arrangement and hopefully it is short term.

The overall administration of the program was handled by the Director of Bilingual Programs for District 20, a Title VII position. The Director regularly visited the schools and conducted staff training

sessions emphasizing instructional objectives, diagnostic-prescriptive evaluation of pupils and the appropriate use of materials. Other parts of the program such as parental involvement were coordinated with tax levy instruction and other funded programs which also operated at each of the participating schools.

B. Test Results

In order to assess the effectiveness of the SEC-B/L Program, participating pupils were pretested in September 1978 at the start of the program and posttested in Spring 1979. The tests utilized were the LAB, on which all students were tested, and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) which was utilized to test the portion of second grade students who received instruction in reading for the entire year. The LAB posttest was given in March 1979 while the MAT posttest was given in May 1979.

The Table of Test Results (see page 4) shows clearly that the SEC-B/L Program had a definite impact upon student participants. For the LAB test, mean gains were achieved at both grade levels, whether one looks at the raw or the corresponding percentile scores. Moreover, for both grades the gains were significant at the .01 level, meaning that the chances are less than one in a hundred that they could have occurred as a result of sampling error. It is also worthy of note that 69 of the 138, 50% of the program participants, had reached the very important 21st percentile LAB cutoff score by the end of the program. Moreover, had the LAB test been given in May rather than March, it could be argued that the gains would have been even more substantial.

For the group of second grade students receiving reading instruction

Table of Test Results: SEC/BL Program: Pre and Posttest Means, Increases (Raw Score and Correspcnding Percentile) and T-Values for Each Grade Level. (LAB and MAT results are shown separately).

LAB Test	(No.Tested)	Pretest Mean R.S.	%ile	Posttest Mean R.S.	%ile	Increase R.S.	%ile	T-Value
Grade 1	(83)	14.5	1	25.7	13	+11.2	+12	14.04**
Grade 2	(55)	25.8	3	34.9	20	+9.1	+17	12.22**
MAT Test								
Grade 2	(24)	1.2		2.5			+1.3	12.12**

** Significant at .01

Number Scoring Over 21st Percentile - LAB Posttest

Grade 1 - 38

Grade 2 - 31

and tested by the MAT, there was a similar gain in mean scores. In fact, the gain is 1.3 or 13 months, certainly quite respectable for a 9 month program. Again, it is significant at the .01 level. (See Table of Test Results).

There are some other comments about testing which can be offered at this time. The diagnostic-prescriptive approach, which has proven itself most successful in other Title I instruction, could be applied in a more comprehensive manner to the SEC-B/L Program by employing different tests for program eligibility and evaluation. There are several possibilities for testing which ought to be explored further. Linked to this is the need for greater understanding on the part of staff of relating the unique needs of students, as evidenced through diagnostic tests, to the plan of instruction in the classroom. Although the SEC-B/L Program was successful for the 1978-79 school year, it is felt that utilizing staff training to futher familiarize staff with test based, diagnostic-prescriptive instruction would enable the program to have an even greater impact.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

With a staff of 3 teachers and 3 paraprofessionals, housed at 2 schools, the SEC-B/L Program can be said to be small but effective. Well articulated with other special programs and tax levy instruction, the SEC-B/L Program provides a positive emphasis in language instruction at the lowest grade levels by working with small groups on a pull out basis. The effectiveness of the program is apparent in the statistically significant mean gains for both grade levels serviced and the 50% of program participants

scoring over the 21st cut-off percentile on the LAB. For grade 2 students tested on the MAT in reading, there are also significant mean gains.

The SEC-B/L Program could be further developed by employing separate tests for program eligibility and evaluation. This possibility of taking an already successful program and elaborating its structure in a more comprehensive manner leads to the following recommendations:

1. The SEC-B/L Program should be recycled. Although small, it meets a demonstrated need on the lowest grade levels. It should remain a pull-out program as it operated maximally in this form.

2. There should be separate testing for eligibility and evaluation. The district should explore the appropriate tests to be utilized.

3. Staff personnel should be trained in the keeping of records so that program instruction can employ a test based, diagnostic-prescriptive approach.